

South Street Seaport Museum,
207 Front Street (Commercial building)
New York
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5678

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM
207 FRONT STREET
(Commercial Building)

HABS No. NY-5678

Location: 207 Front Street,
Between Fulton Street and Beekman Street,
New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: New York City.
Lessee: South Street Seaport Museum.

Present Use: Workshop for volunteers in South Street
Seaport Museum.

Significance: One of the oldest buildings on the Block, ca. 1800,
207 Front Street is an excellent example of mercantile
architecture along the East River, with a twelve-foot
diameter hoist wheel, peaked roof, Flemish Bond brick
facade, and heavy timber floor framing. Constructed on
land fill that was once part of the East River, the
building was owned and operated by some of the most
prominent mercantile families in New York City. Today,
207 Front Street is part of the South Street Seaport Museum,
a group of stores, galleries and piers, standing in close
proximity to high-rise office buildings in Lower Man-
hattan.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: It is most probable that 207 Front Street was built in 1797 when the block was entirely filled and Front Street was "regulated" (or graded). There is a possibility that the original 1797 building was replaced entirely between 1815 and 1816 when the tax assessment shows a large increase.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Water Lot 6, land between the high and low water marks, was granted to Mary Cannon on February 12, 1750. Once filled, the land was designated Block 96 W, Lot 6. Today the property is included in Lot 5. Information for the following chain of title comes from New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
June 4, 1823 Liber 168, p. 151 Indenture made May 31, 1763	Lawrence and Hannah Kortright	John and LeGrande Cannon Lot 6 (7,8,20, 21,22)
NOTE: At some time before 1776, Jeremiah Brower bought the lots form the Cannons.		
May 1, 1796	Theophilus Brower and Henry Roome (Exrs. of Estate of Jeremiah Brower)	Mott Cannon
February 27, 1815 Liber 108, p. 478	Mott and Mary Cannon (Merchant)	Charles Postley (City Cooper) (Lot and premises for \$4,000)
September 21, 1815	Charles and Margaret Postley (City Cooper)	Jonathan I. Coddington (City Merchant) for \$5,150
January 31, 1829 Liber 246, p. 107	Jonathan and Matilda Coddington	George Lorillard (Lots 8, 21, 22)
December 2, 1840 Liber 410, p. 251	Peter Lorillard Plaintiff against Estate of George Lorillard	Peter Lorillard: Lots 6, 22 John G. Coster: Lot 21
December 30, 1843	Estate of Peter Lorillard	Partition Deed as follows: Peter Lorillard, Jr. Maria D.C. Ronalds Catherine Lorillard Eleanora E.L. Spencer Trustee for Dorothea A.L. Wolfe and children
May 21, 1888 Liber 2127, p. 58	Catharine Lorillard Wolfe	Catharine D'Angelmont (Will of Devisee)
February 8, 1927 Liber 3588 p. 197	Catherine D'Angelmont	Howard A. Raymond
February 8, 1927 Liber 1927 p. 199	Howard Raymond	Samuel Kilpatrick
April 15, 1927 Liber 3593 p. 260	Samuel Kilpatrick	Michael J. Ginnane

May 13, 1949
Liber 4622
p. 175

May V. Ginnane,
Catharine G. Gaydos,
Emma G. MacIndoe,
Ruth Ginnane,
Anna G. Powell,
Thomas and Katherine Ginnane,
Phyllis J. McDermott

J. Reed and Marriel Gregory

April 6, 1967
Liber 168
p. 239

Edward R. Gregory
Joan M. Franks,
Agnes M. Nevin
Audrey Hagmaier

207 Water Street Realty
Corporation

April 11, 1968
Book 294, p. 21

207 Water Street Realty
Corporation

Delegate Realty Corporation

July 7, 1969
Book 145, p. 941

Delegate Realty Corporation

Seaport Holdings, Inc.

June 20, 1973
Book 282,
p. 705

Seaport Holdings, Inc.

City of New York
(Lots 1,5,8)

June 20, 1973
Book 282,
p. 814

City of New York

South Street Seaport Museum
(Lease, Lots 1,5,8)

(Air rights transferred to Chase Manhattan Bank)

4. Original plans and construction: When first built in 1797, 207 Front Street, designated 204 Front Street until 1829, was only two-and-a-half stories tall. The evidence for this is a diagonal line on the third floor brick party wall between 207 and 206 Front Street. Aside from existing physical evidence, there is no way to tell how the building looked when originally constructed.
5. Alterations and additions: Between 1815 and 1816 when J. I. Coddington bought the building, 207 Front Street was either totally rebuilt or enlarged. At this time the height was probably raised to four stories by raising the roof or constructing a new one; the roof's framing indicates an early construction date. In addition, there is a huge wooden hoist wheel under the high pitched roof. It is possible that the length of the building was enlarged at this time too. All these alterations must have taken place by 1855 because part of 207 Front Street appears in a lithograph of 206 Front Street dating from that time. In that view, 207 Front Street has five windows gradually becoming smaller toward the high pitched roof.

Two fires, one in 1884, the other in 1892, caused repairs to be made. For \$200, builder M. H. Berry took off the slate roof and substituted tin. He also put in sixteen new beams. Again, in 1892, Berry repaired the building by replacing beams, floors, and window frames.

In 1901, J. Philip Wahlman, architect, and A. W. Sealblom, builder, installed a new fireproof elevator shaft, shored up the front wall, took out and rebuilt two middle piers and extended the window opening to sidewalk level. In addition, they connected 207 and 206 Front Street by way of openings in the south wall and filled the cellar with dry cinders, concrete and cement to bring the floor to sidewalk level. Today, the two buildings are no longer connected.

In 1939, Franklin Iron Works installed a steel and iron marquise no longer there and an unknown builder installed a new staircase from the first to second floors.

Now that the South Street Seaport Museum leases Block 96W from New York City, there are plans, executed by Beyer, Blender & Belle, Architects, to combine all buildings on the block for restoration purposed by providing core service facilities. Eventually 207 Front Street will be restored for Museum purposes.

- B. Historical Context: The early history of Lot 6 and 207 Front Street is connected with some of the most prominent mercantile families in New York City. According to Scoville in The Old Merchants of New York, the Cannons who bought water Lots 5 and 6 in 1750 were a very old and numerous family, and were, in fact, related to the Kortrights; Lawrence Kortright who subsequently sold the land in 1763 back to the Cannons (John and LeGrand) was the second son of Cornelius Kortright who founded that family by marrying Helen Cannon in 1730. Lawrence Kortright was one of the original incorporators of the Chamber of Commerce in 1770. His granddaughter married Alexander Hamilton.

Sometime before he died in 1776, Jeremiah Brower bought the property, still undeveloped, from John and LeGrand Cannon. In 1796 the executors of his estate sold Lot 6 to the Cannons once again: merchant Mott and Mary Cannon. While the Cannons owned the property, 207 Front Street was built; its first occupant was Benjamin Stratton, Jr., a cooper and subsequently Benjamin Stratton, Sr., who ran a boarding house there until 1806. Boarding houses were commonly kept above stores in this district for the convenience of country merchants who came to town to order stock (Rosebrock, Walking Around in South Street, p.49).

In 1815 Jonathan I. Coddington, Esq. (grocer) bought 207 Front Street. According to an obituary in the New York Daily Times, December 26, 1856, he was also Postmaster, most probably of New York City, for several years. "He was appointed by General Jackson to succeed Mr. Gouverneur in 1836; was reappointed by Mr. Van Buren in 1840, and continued to hold office until spring 1842."

While J. Coddington owned the building, an 1828 guidebook to New York (The Picture of New York & Stranger's Guide to the Commercial Metropolis, p. 460) stated, "Front Street, and Water-Street, together with various slips intersecting them from South-Street, are occupied by wholesale grocers and commission merchants, iron dealers, or as warehouses for the storage of merchandise and produce of every description." (In 1829, after the New Fulton Fish Market was built across the street, the numbering system was changed; before 1829, 207 Front Street was 204 Front Street) The building remained a grocery store until 1851.

In 1829, George Lorillard, a very wealthy merchant, bought the building. The Lorillard family continued to own the store and warehouse until 1901. Scoville mentions a "queer will" George Lorillard left" entailing his property sixty years and thereby violating a State Law passed in 1828, forbidding property to be entailed. This explains why Peter Lorillard, his brother, contested the will in 1840 and was allotted Lots 6 and 22 by the court.

In the latter part of the 19th century and into the 20th century, the building was used as a market, offices and warehouse for fish.

An Overview of the Occupants of 207 Front Street: The first occupant was Benjamin Stratton who lived there from 1798 until 1802. Between 1803 and 1806, Stratton's father ran a boarding house there. By 1808, Abiah Swift brought his grocery business to the building and in 1815 he shared the store with L. Magee & Sons. J. I. Coddington, grocer, bought the store in 1815 from the Postleys and stayed there until 1828. Between 1829 and 1839, the building was occupied by a different person each year. Next came W. S. Woodhull from 1840 through 1844. John Wolfe used the store for various purposes including a wholesale grocery and a gunpowder store from 1845 until 1868. In 1868 C. L. Wolfe moved in and stayed until 1927 when Michael Ginnane bought the building and installed his fish market. In 1950, another fish business, J. Reed and M. L. Gregory, moved into 207 Front Street staying until 1960.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: 207 Front Street is one of the oldest buildings on the block, its construction date being 1797.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 21'-11" x 65'-4-1/2"; three-bay facade; rectangular shape; four-and-a-half stories.
2. Foundations: Unknown (basement has been filled in).
3. Walls: Flemish bond brick facade. A sign extends across the front facade between second and third floors. The sign reads "J. Reed Gregory & Sons, Inc."
4. Structural system, framing: Masonry bearing walls with timber joists.
5. Chimneys: One chimney, located on the south wall, services a fireplace on the third floor. Fireplace measures 21" wide and 31" high.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Two entrance doors are located on the first floor. They are a retractable garage door and a solid core door leading to the interior stairwell.
 - b. Windows and shutters: First floor- one fixed sash window. Second, third, fourth floors- 1/1 double-hung wood sash with granite lintel and sill. Windows on fourth floor are shorter than the others. Rear windows have iron shutters.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Peaked gable roof with a roof hatch on each slope; built-up roll roofing.
8. Hardware: Star anchor on front facade next to second floor window (south wall).

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

First floor- Small office at southeast corner, remnants of cooler at northwest corner.

Second floor- Front office and rear storage area.

Third floor- Front office, rear apartment.

Fourth floor- Storage area.

Attic- Storage area with 11' diameter hoist wheel.

2. Stairways: Stairs leading from first floor to attic are located along the north wall.

3. Flooring: First floor- concrete; second floor to attic- wood plank.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

Walls, first floor: Plaster with scored block patterns;

Second-fourth floors: exposed brick; Attic (north wall): timber framing infilled with brick. Ceiling, first floor: metal; Second floor-attic: exposed ceiling joists.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: None of note.

b. Windows: Note of note.

6. Mechanical equipment:

a. Moving fixtures: 11' diameter hoist wheel in attic (good condition).

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: 207 Front Street is part of the South Street Seaport Museum, a group of stores, galleries and piers, standing in close proximity to high-rise office buildings in lower Manhattan.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Early Views: A ca. 1855 colored lithographic view of 206 Front Street shows a glimpse of 207 Front Street to the right. From the files of the Museum of the City of New York and also appearing Rosebrock, Walking Around in South Street, p. 50.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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(architectural information)

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington D.C. office) project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects- Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures.